What to Expect When You See a Healthcare Practitioner

How do you know which practitioner to choose, and which different treatments may be right for you? Perhaps you are seeing a new healthcare practitioner for the first time, or trying a new therapy or treatment; how do you know what to expect? By One Dance UK Healthier Dancer Programme Manager Erin Sanchez

Step 1
Choosing a practitioner
Healthcare professionals with experience treating dancers or other athletes will be more likely to understand your needs and the physical and psychological demands of dancing, and thus provide efficient treatment. Develop a good relationship with your healthcare practitioners, so they can give you informed advice on your dancing and your circumstances. It will also help ensure that you have someone you trust to seek advice early and regularly, so niggles don’t turn into something more serious.

Choices include GPs and consultants (trained in all aspects of ill-health, not just injury management), physiotherapists, massage therapists, complimentary/holistic practitioners, nutritionists, mental health professionals, fitness practitioners (such as personal trainers and strength and conditioning coaches), and sports and dance scientists. Also keep in mind that though it may not be the quickest route, GP registration entitles you to free comprehensive medical assessment and treatment via the NHS - a valuable resource for dancers with limited funds.

Step 2
Learn about the treatment
What does the treatment aim to do and typically include? You can learn more about different treatments by visiting One Dance UK’s Which Practitioner? page (see link below), which lists information on different types of practitioners, including the work they do, and what they can treat, with links to further information.

Step 3
Learn about the practitioner
What are their qualifications and experience in their specialism area, and with dancers? Do they have insurance and appropriate registrations with governing/regulatory bodies and professional associations/bodies?

Some practitioners use protected titles, including the titles Chiropractor, Dietician, GP, Osteopath, Physician, Physiotherapist, Podiatrist/Chiroprist, Psychologist, Radiologist, and Surgeon. These practitioners must be registered with the appropriate governing/regulatory body, or risk prosecution and a fine. You can check registration of practitioners through their regulatory body (also listed on the Which Practitioner? page). Practitioners not listed above do not have protected titles, including massage therapists, nutritionists, Pilates practitioners, homeopaths, naturopaths, etc. In this case, it is best to ensure that the practitioner you are seeing is a member of a professional association/body relevant to their practice.

Step 4
Know your rights
For NHS services, refer to the NHS Constitution for England, Patient Rights Act (Scotland), and Citizens Advice website (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland). For private services, contact the regulatory or professional body for your practitioner, or refer to The Private Patients’ Forum.

Educate yourself about what to expect from treatment, including conduct of the practitioner. Do not be afraid to ask questions. You can also bring a parent or friend with you. If anything doesn’t feel right, don’t be afraid to step the appointment and leave. If you feel that any conduct was inappropriate, contact the governing body or professional association to make a complaint. This will help to protect you and others in the future.

Note for schools and companies
When hiring healthcare practitioners, always ensure they are registered and in good standing with appropriate governing/regulatory bodies (for protected titles), or that they are registered with a professional association/body as described above. Letters of referral from former employers and patients, relevant to the age and requirements of your organisation are also recommended.

Furthermore, it may be helpful to have a regular feedback opportunity with both the practitioner and students or dancers to enable open lines of communication regarding treatment and support required at your organisation.

Check our One Dance UK Healthcare Practitioners Directory, which lists dance specialist practitioners around the UK. www.onedanceuk.org/health-practitioners-directory

Further Information
For questions, contact One Dance UK’s Healthier Dancer Programme at help@onedanceuk.org or 0207 713 0730, who will assist you with support from our Dance Medicine and Science Expert Panel and the National Institute of Dance Medicine and Science.

You can also read our information sheet Finding a Dance Healthcare Practitioner, available via our website.